

# **PRESBYTERY OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE**

## **COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

### **2021 MANUAL**

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# COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY MANUAL

## SECTION 1

### INTRODUCTION AND AUTHORITY

#### **Introduction**

The Committee on Ministry is charged with building relationships and strengthening the connectional church. Its primary purpose is to care for the churches within the presbytery and the people who staff these churches. That includes ministers of the Word and Sacrament (teaching elders), commissioned ruling elders), and certified Christian educators. The Committee on Ministry is also tasked with caring for any of the above persons who are on the rolls of the presbytery who do not have a call. That includes honorably retired, at-large (persons who do not currently have a call), persons in other validated ministries (such as hospital chaplains, professors at Vanderbilt Divinity School, etc.) and ruling elders eligible to be commissioned to limited pastoral service.

#### **Authority**

Historically, the Committee on Ministry was authorized and required through the *Book of Order*. The current *Book of Order* does not require presbyteries to have a Committee on Ministry but does require presbyteries to develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve teaching elders and congregations within their bounds (G-3.0307). The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee has chosen to continue using a Committee on Ministry. Therefore, the authority of the Committee on Ministry is derived from the *Book of Order* and the presbytery's *Mission and Operations Manual*. The *Mission and Operations Manual* of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee defines the responsibility and authority of the Committee on Ministry as follows:

*The Committee on Ministry serves as advisor to teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, certified Christian educators, sessions, and congregations of the presbytery. The Committee on Ministry oversees the processes for congregations in transitions in pastoral leadership, and guides sessions seeking temporary pastoral relationships.*

*The membership of the Committee on Ministry shall be 18 persons - nine ruling elders and nine teaching elders, none of whom shall represent the same congregation. Committee on Ministry members shall exercise appropriate confidentiality in the committee's work. The Committee on Ministry may use teaching elders and ruling elders not among its members for service in particular capacities. The Co-Executive Presbyters and the Stated Clerk shall serve as staff support to the Committee on Ministry.*

*The Committee on Ministry is granted authority by the Presbytery to act on its behalf on the following:*

- *Review and approve terms of call for teaching elders and commissioned ruling elders;*
- *Approve calls of teaching elder members of the presbytery within the presbytery;*
- *Annually review and approve temporary pastoral relationships, including Interims, as well as concur with the termination of temporary pastoral relationships when requested by sessions;*
- *Annual review and validate ministries of teaching elders not serving in congregations;*
- *Dissolve installed pastoral relationships when the teaching elder and congregation concur, and abolish pastoral positions when requested by the congregation;*
- *Dismiss teaching elders to other presbyteries, upon the request of the calling presbytery;*
- *Grant requests from teaching elders for release from exercise of ordered ministry with the reasons for such release recorded in the minutes of the Presbytery;*
- *Recommend to presbytery the initial commissioning of ruling elders to particular pastoral service;*
- *Review and renew commissions of ruling elders;*
- *Call meetings of sessions;*
- *Approve moderators of sessions for churches without an installed pastor;*
- *Designate persons to moderate session and congregational meetings;*
- *Designate members of the Committee on Ministry, the Co-Executive Presbyters, or the Stated Clerk, to preside at meetings of the session and/or congregation; such person may not moderate the session of the church of which that person is a member;*
- *Grant status of Honorable Retirement to teaching elders;*
- *Grant status of Member-at-Large to teaching elders;*
- *Maintain the pulpit supply list and list of trained interim teaching elders;*
- *Responsible for Presbytery's sexual misconduct / boundaries training, held every three years; such training to be completed by teaching elders and ruling elders commissioned to service within the first six months of reception;*
- *Perform the initial in-depth examination of candidates seeking ordination by the Presbytery, after clearance of appropriate background checks;*
- *Perform the in-depth examination of all teaching elders seeking membership in the Presbytery, after clearance of appropriate background checks; if the teaching elder does not receive unanimous approval of the Committee on Ministry, a subsequent examination of the teaching elder must occur at Presbytery upon request;*

- *Approve commissions for installations (commissions to ordain or to ordain and install are to be approved by Presbytery); and*
- *Ordinarily, the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee does not receive a teaching elder seeking membership in the Presbytery as a member-at-large unless the teaching elder is the spouse of a teaching elder being received by the Committee on Ministry for the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, or a teaching elder pursuing post-graduate study within the bounds of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee. The Committee on Ministry will review any such request on a case-by-case basis.*

Therefore, the Committee on Ministry's primary mode of being in relationship – after the model of Jesus Christ – takes the forms of pastor, counselor, facilitator, and companion in the journey of faith and ministry with the congregations and persons who are members of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.

## SECTION 2 THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

The Committee on Ministry's work is divided into five categories and therefore into five teams and task forces. The team tasked with caring for the people who are members of the presbytery is the **Pastoral Care Team**. The task force charged with caring for churches as they go through transitions in leadership is the **Transitions Task Force**. The task force responsible for examination persons requesting membership in the presbytery is the **Examinations Task Force**. Sessions, teaching elders, commissioned ruling elders, certified Christian educators, and congregations and their roles of service to the church, the **Calls and Contracts**, are reviewed by the Stated Clerk. The team responsible for the presbytery's connection with churches including times of stress and/or conflict is the **Mediation Team**.

The *Mission and Operations Manual* allows all committees within the presbytery to function in the following ways:

*Committees may set their own meeting schedules, and may utilize teleconferencing / videoconferencing (i.e., conference call, Skype, etc.) to take action. Meetings shall ensure that all members can participate, a quorum is present, and minutes are prepared and provided to members within a reasonable period of time after the meeting. Committee minutes, including team, task force, and work group reports, shall be provided to the Administrative Committee, as well as to the presbytery office and the Stated Clerk. The notice of the meeting shall include any motions and / or documents or other information necessary for the committee's work. Any action(s) taken shall be reported at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the committee through its minutes, and to the next stated meeting of the presbytery through its report. Non-members may participate in the meeting, at the invitation of the committee chair and with the approval of a majority of the committee members. Voting by electronic means on committee matters shall be allowed as long as the vote is received within the time limit set by the chair of the committee.*

*Regular attendance by members of committees is necessary and expected for the effective work of the presbytery. When a person has unexcused absences from three consecutive meetings of a committee, this shall constitute an automatic resignation of the member. Any and all resignations shall be reported to the chair of the Administrative Committee and the chair of the Nominating Task Force in order to proceed with a replacement.*

*The term of office for persons elected to serve on committees shall be three years except for the Permanent Judicial Commission, whose members are elected for one six-year term. Membership shall be arranged in three classes. No person shall serve an aggregate of more than six consecutive years on a committee. After six consecutive years of service, a member must rotate off for one year before being eligible to serve another term on that committee; the only exception to this rule is service as Moderator of the presbytery.*

The Committee on Ministry normally meets monthly and all of its members are assigned to one or more task forces or teams. The teams and task forces meet separately as needed. The teams and task forces have chairs that coordinate with the Chair of the Committee on Ministry and with the Co-Executive Presbyters to insure that the work is being accomplished. In addition to serving on task forces or teams, members of the Committee on Ministry will need to serve as liaisons to churches, sessions and staffs. Since some of the work of Committee on Ministry overlaps with the functions of the Co-Executive Presbyters and the Stated Clerk, the Co-Executive Presbyters and the Stated Clerk meet with the Committee on Ministry and serve as resources as needed.

Each task force and team of the Committee on Ministry will develop the necessary resources to fulfill their functions. These documents must be approved by the entire Committee on Ministry. These documents, attached as appendices to this manual, will be updated as necessary by the presbytery staff, upon approval of the Committee on Ministry. The presbytery office maintains files on congregations, teaching elders, commissioned ruling elders, etc. The Committee on Ministry may have access to these files through the COM Chair, and may have opportunity to provide information to be placed in the file.

### **SECTION 3**

## **TRANSITIONS TASK FORCE**

The Transitions Task Force works in conjunction with sessions, teaching elders, and congregations through training, resources, and support. The Transitions Task Force

1. guides sessions and congregations during times of transition from the announcement of a pastor's departure until the time of the installation of new pastoral leadership;
2. makes recommendation for dissolution of pastoral relationship when pastor and congregation concur;
3. recommends establishment and dissolution of pastoral positions;
4. assists congregations without installed pastors in obtaining leadership, recommending the appointments of moderators of sessions without installed pastors;
5. approves Ministry Information Forms;
6. works with the Stated Clerk regarding temporary pastoral relationships, including contracts and terms of call;
7. works with the Stated Clerk regarding commissioned ruling elder relationships, including contracts, responsibilities, and terms of call;
8. works with the Stated Clerk regarding annual reports, reviewing and making recommendations for approval of terms of call, renewal of temporary pastoral relationships, renewal of commissioned ruling elder relationships, validated ministries, etc.;
9. reports concerns affecting health of congregations to the Mediation Team; and
10. encourages and assists congregations in transitions with mission studies.

## SECTION 4

### EXAMINATIONS TASK FORCE

The Examinations Task Force conducts the in-depth examination of teaching elders requesting membership in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, as well as candidates, and ruling elders for commissioning to particular pastoral service. The Examinations Task Force

- performs the in-depth examination of all teaching elders seeking membership in the Presbytery, after clearance of appropriate background checks; if the teaching elder does not receive unanimous approval of the Committee on Ministry, a subsequent examination of the teaching elder must occur at Presbytery upon request;
- performs the initial in-depth examination of candidates seeking ordination by the Presbytery; as part of the examination by the presbytery, the candidate will be required to present a sermon / homily at the presbytery meeting;
- works with the Co-Executive Presbyters and Stated Clerk to insure that all required background checks are performed prior to the examination; and
- reviews the statement of faith and autobiographical statement of the person being examined. Upon approval of the examination by the COM, these documents will be presented to the presbytery at the time of the examination by the presbytery.

Ordinarily, the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee does not receive a teaching elder seeking membership in the Presbytery as a member-at-large unless the teaching elder is the spouse of a teaching elder being received by the Committee on Ministry for the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, or a teaching elder pursuing post-graduate study within the bounds of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee. The Committee on Ministry, upon recommendation of the Examinations Task Force, will review any such request on a case-by-case basis and make a decision.

## **SECTION 5 CALLS AND CONTRACTS**

The Stated Clerk works with congregations and people who are members of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee to support sessions, teaching elders, commissioned ruling elders, certified Christian educators, and congregations. In conjunction with the presbytery office and the Transitions Team, the Stated Clerk

- maintains contact and reviews status with all teaching elders, commissioned ruling elders, and certified Christian educators;
- reviews the initial terms of call to insure the terms meet the presbytery's minimum terms of call;
- reviews annually the adequacy of terms of calls of all full-time installed teaching elders and full-time commissioned ruling elders;
- reviews and recommends annual renewals of temporary pastoral relationships and contracts;
- reviews and makes recommendations regarding the status of teaching elders who are members-at-large;
- reviews and makes recommendations regarding teaching elders and validated ministries outside congregations (G-2.0503);
- reports to the COM any teaching elders who are not in a validated ministry and do not fulfill the requirements of member-at-large;
- works with presbytery staff to maintain a roster for pulpit supply and interims (posted on the presbytery website); and
- works with presbytery staff to maintain a roster of teaching elders within the presbytery who have successfully completed Week I of Interim Training and who are open to serving as interims.

## **SECTION 6**

### **PASTORAL CARE TEAM**

The Pastoral Care Team will work with the Co-Executive Presbyters and Committee on Ministry to ensure teaching elders in the presbytery are provided with pastoral care. This team, composed of a minimum of seven (7) people, will include members of the Pastor-to-Pastor Program and others who may be recruited to extend care. The convener of the Pastoral Care Team shall be a member of the Committee on Ministry. The Co-Executive Presbyters shall serve as staff to the Pastoral Care Team.

The Pastoral Care Team will carry out the COM's support of commissioned ruling elders and teaching elders who are making the transition from theological education to ordered ministry. This support is facilitated by appointing mentors and by overseeing and supporting these relationships.

The Pastoral Care Team will appoint a mentor, who is an experienced teaching elder member of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee. The mentor shall be assigned for a period of two (2) years to teaching elders entering their first call, and indefinitely for commissioned ruling elders. If for any reason the relationship needs to be dissolved, the two should first discuss the need with each other and then confer with the convener of the Pastoral Care Team, to facilitate the dissolution and assignment of a new mentor.

## **SECTION 7**

### **MEDIATION TEAM**

The Mediation Team works with congregations, sessions, teaching elders, commissioned ruling elders, and certified Christian Educators to provide congregational care and to facilitate the resolution of any conflict.

The Mediation Team, composed of 12 members (teaching and ruling elders), will be responsible for inquiring into difficulties within congregations. Members of the Mediation Team will work with the Stated Clerk, the Co-Executive Presbyters, and the chair of the Committee on Ministry to address concerns that arise within the presbytery. Ordinarily, investigating committee members shall be appointed from the Mediation Team. Mandatory training will be provided for the Mediation Team. The convener of this team shall be a member of the Committee on Ministry. The Co-Executive Presbyters and Stated Clerk shall serve as staff to the Mediation Team.